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## Texas judge goes easy on killer of gay men

*Hampton sends message that "homosexuality is punishable by execution and that the same goes for all minority groups"*

By Chris Bull

DALLAS — A broad coalition of activists here are mounting an intense campaign to remove from office District Court Judge Jack Hampton, who admitted Dec. 15 that he gave the 18-year-old killer of two gay men a lenient sentence because the men were "queer." Hundreds of protesters staged a demonstration outside the Dallas City Hall on Dec. 21 demanding Hampton's resignation.

The event was originally organized by the Dallas AIDS Resource Center to protest the city's disregard for the AIDS epidemic. Activists planned to sketch on the street chalk outlines of over 1,100 Dallas residents who have died of AIDS. To protest Hampton's homophobia, sketches of the two murdered men — Tommy Lee Trimble and John Lloyd Griffin — were added to those of people dead from AIDS.

In explaining his Nov. 19 sentence to the *Dallas Times Herald*, Hampton, a conservative Republican elected in 1980, said: "I don't care for queers cruising the streets. I've got a teen-age boy.... I put prostitutes and gays at about the same level. If these boys had picked up two prostitutes and taken them to the woods and killed them, I'd consider that a similar case. I'd be hard put to give somebody life for killing a prostitute." He added, "If they hadn't been out on the streets picking up teenage boys, they would not have been killed."

According to observers, Hampton is known as a "hanging judge" because he routinely imposes out harsh sentences — especially to Black and Latino defendants. In this case he sentenced Richard Bednarski to 30 years in prison. Bednarski will be eligible for parole in ten years. Had Bednarski killed "a couple of housewives out shopping, not hurting anybody," the judge said he would have sentenced the young man to life in prison. "I've been practicing criminal law since 1955, and everything I do is a sum total of all my education and experience." Some murder victims, Hampton added, are "less innocent" in their deaths than others.

Hampton also told the *Times Herald* that in deciding the sentence he considered Bednarski's youth, his lack of criminal record, his good standing in college and his father's occupation — a police officer.

A Dallas jury found Bednarski guilty of first-degree murder, but under Texas law the defense may elect to allow the judge in the case to decide the defendant's sentence. Kevin Clancy, attorney for Bednarski, said he thought the judge would be more sympathetic to his client than the jury. Clancy asked for a five-year sentence. The prosecuting attorney, David Pickett, asked that Bednarski live in prison.

Lesbian and gay groups in Dallas and around the country slammed Hampton's sentencing and his remarks. "These are just the kinds of comments that send messages to the community that it's still open season on gay and lesbian citizens," said Kevin Berrill, director of the National Gay and Lesbian

Task Force's anti-violence project.

Jean O'Leary, executive director of National Gay Rights Advocates, said: "Fair-minded people must be appalled by Hampton. It's one of the most openly bigoted decisions by a judge since the *Hardwick* case [when the U.S. Supreme Court refused to overturn Georgia's sodomy law]. It's distressing to hear a judge devalue human life."

Activists were particularly angered by Hampton's implication that because Trimble and Griffin may have tried to pick up the young men, they deserved to be murdered. "I think it was understood by everyone that they went into the bushes for some oral sex," Hampton told the *Times Herald*.

Retorted John Thomas, director of the Dallas AIDS Resource Center, "The idea that gay men spend all their time driving around trying to pick up teenagers is a devastating lie. Besides, it has nothing to do with the actual case."

Dallas lesbian activist Charlotte Taft, an organizer of the Dec. 21 demonstration, told *GCN* that Hampton is "really saying that homosexuality is punishable by execution and that the same goes for all minority groups." Taft also criticized Hampton's remark about prostitutes. "I am interested that he left out the fact that many 'respectable' judges, lawyers and business people frequent prostitutes. I think he is reflecting a view in our society that puts people into different categories and values some human life more than other human life."

Thomas and Taft pointed out that it was Bednarski and a group of nine friends who were out "cruising the streets." Witnesses told the court that the students drove nearly 40 miles from a suburb to the Oak Lawn area of Dallas in order to "pester homosexuals."

According to court testimony, the two men invited Bednarski and a friend into their car. When the car reached a secluded section of a near-by park, Bednarski ordered the men to remove their clothes. After Griffin and Trimble refused, Bednarski pulled out a pistol and shot the two repeatedly. Trimble died immediately of gunshot wounds to the head, neck and back. Griffin died five days later in a Dallas hospital. Friends of Bednarski testified that he later bragged about the killings, explaining that he stuck the gun in Trimble's mouth before shooting him. When Griffin fell to the ground and tried to crawl away, Bednarski stepped on the man's leg and shot him in the back several times, according to testimony.

William Waybourne, president of the Dallas Gay Alliance (DGA), told *GCN* that Dallas youths often go "gay-bashing" in heavily gay parts of the city. He said that Hampton was encouraging the practice by giving the killer a light sentence.

However, Waybourne said he is not optimistic that Hampton will be removed from

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## Queer year-end flicks— Fierstein, Almodóvar and more



Pedro Almodovar



Protesters picket outside John Hancock building in downtown Boston Dec. 19

## ACT UP/Boston back at John Hancock

*Activists continue to battle health insurer to cover AIDS treatment*

By Judy Harris

BOSTON—Eight members of ACT/UP Boston were arrested Nov. 19 for civil disobedience (CD) in front of the John Hancock Tower in Copley Square in order to call attention to that company's refusal to reimburse its clients for aerosolized pentamidine (AP). AP is a prophylaxis and treatment for pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP) — the leading cause of death among people with AIDS (PWAs).

Six of the eight gay men arrested at the demonstration were arrested in October during a similar protest — ACT UP's first Hancock zap. In that case all the CDs pleaded to "sufficiency of the evidence" — a plea which is not an admission of guilt, but rather an indication that the arrested believe they would be found guilty by a jury or

judge if the case went to trial. This time, however, the CD participants say they are planning to plead innocent to the trespassing and disorderly conduct charges on the grounds that CD is necessary to demonstrate the seriousness of PWAs' needs for drug treatments — especially those that are relatively inaccessible to PWAs in Boston.

The event was attended by about 100 people — mostly gay men and lesbians who picketed in the standard circular demo fashion in front of the building. But along with the usual angry chants of "50,000 dead from AIDS, where was John Hancock?" and "Hancock wants its customers to die," the protestors incorporated a seasonal

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## Quote of the week

"I put prostitutes and gays at about the same level. If these boys had picked up two prostitutes and taken them to the woods and killed them, I'd consider that a similar case. And I'd be hard put to give somebody life for killing a prostitute."

— Texas judge Jack Hampton, explaining why he decreased the sentence of a man convicted of murdering two gay men.

## Gay man challenges LAPD

LOS ANGELES—National Gay Rights Advocates (NGRA) Nov. 29 filed suit in Los Angeles Superior Court against the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) on behalf of Mitchell Grobeson, a gay man. Grobeson, a former police sergeant, accused fellow officers, and their superiors of conspiring to force his resignation through threats and intimidation because he is gay.

NGRA is seeking \$5 million in damages for Grobeson and a court order barring the police department from continuing to discriminate against gay officers.

Grobeson, who was promoted several times by the department before his superiors found that he is gay, said he was identified as a "faggot" at police roll calls and was harassed by the department for almost a year. The lawsuit lists 22 separate causes of action against the department, the city of Los Angeles and the several officers.

□Chris Bull



S.F. marchers take to the streets to honor the International Day to Stop Violence Against Women

## Women rally for International Day to Stop Violence

SAN FRANCISCO — Over 300 women filled the streets of San Francisco on the night of Dec. 3 to protest violence against women in this country and abroad. Sponsored by the groups Women Against Imperialism and the Bay Area Pledge of Resistance, their theme, "From El Salvador to the Philippines to the U.S.A., Stop Violence Against Women," framed the evening's protest. The demonstration was organized to mark the International Day to Stop Violence Against Women.

The women targetted the El Salvador and Philippine Consulates to condemn U.S. training and backing of repressive governments of Duarte and Aquino. "The militaries of these regimes systematically use rape and sexual torture of women as a means of repression," stated Pledge organizer Mary Kay Hunyady, addressing the crowd of women who gathered at Union Square before the march. "We know that the U.S. spends \$1.5 million daily for military aid to El Salvador. This military aid is symptomatic of a system based on male supremacy and violence, which we've come together tonight to oppose in all its forms, as it affects women here and around the world," Hunyady said.

Hundreds of women wore bright yellow signs reading "Lesbian and Proud" to oppose the rise of anti-lesbian violence. One lesbian commented on the significance of

lesbians and straight women working collaboratively in the demonstration to promote lesbian visibility. "It's important to me to feel supported by my straight and bisexual women friends, to see non-lesbians who are as enthusiastic about projecting lesbian issues as they are other progressive issues. After all, every woman benefits from lesbian liberation."

The demonstration was attended by women representing many different organizations and issues, such as the Bay Area Committee Against Operation Rescue, the United Communities for Human Rights, and several Philippine and Salvadoran groups and solidarity committees. Contingents from Mills College and San Francisco State University also joined the march.

Officially designated Nov. 25, the International Day to Stop Violence Against Women commemorates the anniversary of the ambush, torture and murder of three women activists by the military in the Dominican Republic, and is widely recognized by women in Latin America. Recently it has also been marked by marches and rallies in the Philippines and West Germany, and now, for the first time, it has been commemorated by women in the U.S.

□Sally Thomas

## MCI settles with gay man who brought discrimination suit

NEW YORK — A gay manager at MCI who claimed the company fired him because of his sexual orientation has reached a settlement with the company. David Gatten filed a complaint against MCI with the New York City Human Rights Commission, the group responsible for enforcement of New York's anti-discrimination laws which protect gay men and lesbians.

According to Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, the legal organization that represented Gatten, both Gatten and MCI agreed to an "amicable" financial settlement, the terms of which were not made public. MCI, however, did announce that it will broaden the wording of its existing anti-discrimination policy to specifically prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

□Jennie McKnight

## Boston les/gay group to assess goals

BOSTON — Members of the Greater Boston Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance at the group's quarterly meeting Dec. 12 assessed the state of the organization, abolished the position of Executive Director, and established greater "focus" in an effort to revitalize the Alliance's membership and activities in 1989. Outgoing Chairperson Don Gorton reflected on the role of the Alliance: to "find the issues" and engage in politics that serve a diverse lesbian and gay community. Gorton said that while fighting homophobia, the Alliance must also oppose "sexism, racism, classism, able-bodiedism, agesim and ethnocentrism."

The tone of the meeting was staid until confusion arose over the vote that eliminated what Gorton said was the unaffordable position of Executive Director. When an Alliance member claimed that a technical rule about notifying members of the vote had not been followed, Gorton asserted that the notification had definitely taken place. Said Gorton, "This is the kind of thing that makes this fucking job so unattractive.... I know of nobody who wants to run for chairperson in the future, and I would certainly put myself at the bottom of the list."

That comment helped stimulate a bold discussion about the organization's stifling structure, lack of focus, and inability to bring its myriad goals to fruition. Some members complained that too many committees and too many board members make it impossible to plan actions that galvanize Alliance members. One member asserted that "we must recognize our limitations."

Many suggestions were made to improve the Alliance's effectiveness, from making meetings monthly instead of quarterly to abolishing the steering committee. Consensus seemed to emerge that, as one member

put it, "We need less between the people and the action." In addition, members discussed the need to be less nasty and aggressive toward each other.

Based on a poll that Gorton conducted on Alliance priorities, most members said that the gay and lesbian civil rights bill should become the group's top priority. Gorton said that the upcoming meeting Jan. 9 would provide a time to move forward with the new ideas. A day after the Dec. 12 meeting, Gorton said that "maybe my hat is back in the ring... for the chairperson position." Clearly heartened by the meeting, Gorton added that "I think this is the year for the gay and lesbian rights bill."

□Joe Cice

## Man charged with bashing also faces contempt charges

BOSTON — A South Weymouth man faces two trials Jan. 9 and Jan. 18 stemming from his alleged assault and subsequent harassment of a gay man, Ronald Davis, who plans to testify against him. According to Davis, on Nov. 25, 1987, James Foley and two other men impersonated police officers in order to gain entry to a Boston gay bar, the Haymarket, where they bashed Davis and another gay man. The Massachusetts Attorney General's office obtained a court order prohibiting Foley from further harassing anyone because of her or his "actual or perceived sexual orientation" — the first such injunction in Massachusetts history. Foley faces criminal contempt charges for violating the injunction by following Davis in a car, and telling him, "Hey faggot, you better keep your fucking mouth closed or me and my friends will get you."

Attorney General James Shannon, whose office is prosecuting the contempt case Jan. 9, called for "the severest penalties," saying, "This office will simply not tolerate acts or threats of violence which are motivated by one's fear or intolerance of another." Dave Rodman, who works in the office of the district attorney prosecuting the assault case, said simply that "Foley could go to jail for this." Bail in the contempt case was set at \$100,000, and Foley could be fined up to \$5,000 and spend two and one-half years in prison if found guilty in the contempt case alone.

□Joe Cice

## Nazi computer games proliferating


BONN, West Germany — Computer games aimed at West German youth that urge players to conquer territory for the Aryan people or wipe out beggars, homosexuals, ecologists and Jews are being produced and distributed rapidly despite an official ban. A report in the *Boston Globe* stated that teachers and law enforcement officials are concerned about the proliferation of the games and their effects on the young players, but that confiscating existing copies of the games and stopping further production is extremely difficult.

Gerhard Adams, deputy director of the Bonn government office that monitors materials that might "endanger" youth, told the *Globe* that "The neo-Nazi underground has changed tactics," by circulating racist and anti-Semitic information in school computer programs instead of handing out leaflets.

Among the banned games are "Clean Germany" and "Aryan Test." The former plays the tune of the anthem "Deutschland Uber Alles" and encourages players to kill beggars, homosexuals, Greens Party environmentalists and communists, according to the *Globe*. "Aryan Test" greets the player with "hello Nazi" and asks a series of questions to determine whether the player is an Aryan or a Jew. "Elimination" is suggested for those identified as Jews.

The *Globe* story asserts that "games inciting racial hatred and propagating Nazi ideology are believed to originate in West Germany," although "the majority of games glorifying war and vigilante action are produced in the United States and Great Britain."

□Jennie McKnight

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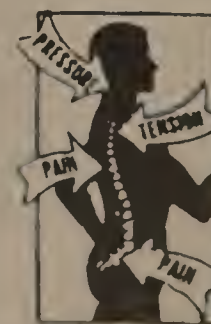
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# ACT UP's Wall St. case ends...

By Andrew Miller

NEW YORK — The last remaining defendant of ACT UP/NY's "Wall Street 111" agreed to accept an adjournment in contemplation of dismissal, or ACD, Dec. 19, ending the possibility of a court trial for any of the participants in civil disobedience arrested at the demonstration in New York's Financial District nearly nine months ago. The District Attorney's office moved to dismiss the charges against two other remaining defendants earlier in the week.

The last defendant, Richard Deagle, faced yet another adjournment for a trial date, due to schedule conflicts on the part of the lawyers and the judge, and chose instead to accept the ACD, which was offered by the DA's office in exchange for not bringing the case to trial. The charges against Deagle will be officially thrown out if he is not re-arrested within the next six months.

In related news, a trial date of Jan. 18 has been set for 11 ACT UP members arrested Aug. 3 in the office of New York City's Commissioner of Health Stephen Joseph. Demonstrators were protesting the release of Health Department figures which they claim grossly misrepresent the number of current and potential AIDS cases in New York City. The figures have since been disputed by

David Axelrod, the New York State Health Commissioner, and by members of Joseph's own staff. The 11, who were arrested after disrupting a health department meeting and refusing to leave Joseph's office, face misdemeanor trespassing charges.

According to Joel Farley, an ACT UP attorney working on the case, the judge has granted a discovery motion made by the defense, which will give ACT UP lawyers access to all epidemiological information used by Health Dept. officials to compile "The New York City Strategic Plan for AIDS," as well as copies of all references cited in the New York City working paper entitled "Estimated HIV-Infected New Yorkers." Those involved believe these documents are the basis for the New York City AIDS estimates made by Joseph's office, which were released last summer.

Defendants in the case say they hope to create a "political trial" by using the documents to disprove the Health Department figures, thereby justifying their civil disobedience and discrediting Joseph's office. Farley says he also plans to subpoena Joseph himself, a move which, if successful, would force the health commissioner to attend and testify at the trial. □

## ...and a demo is averted

By Andrew Miller

NEW YORK — For the first time in its history, ACT UP/NY cancelled a demonstration it had planned because the action's proposed target met most of ACT UP's demands. A demonstration planned for Dec. 15th at New York University Medical Center (NYU) to protest the exclusionary design of NYU's AIDS drug trials was called off after representatives from NYU, Bellevue (its city-run affiliate hospital) and the city's Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) met and agreed to open 11 NYU AIDS drug trials to Bellevue patients. Previously, NYU had restricted the trials to include only NYU patients.

Because NYU is a private hospital and Bellevue is run by New York City, the trials' design had effectively excluded people with AIDS (PWAs) who are Black, Latino, female or who use IV-drugs, since they are more likely to be poor, and therefore reliant on public, rather than private hospitals. In New York, these groups make up more than half the AIDS caseload, according to sources in ACT UP.

Mark Harrington, a member of ACT UP's Treatment and Data Subcommittee, which initiated the action, told *GCN* that many of the committee's letters to the hospitals involved went unanswered until the demonstration was announced. Representatives from NYU and Bellevue finally met together, apparently in response

to the threat of a demonstration on NYU's doorstep.

Harrington speculated that NYU had desired to maintain the homogeneity of its trials' participants. Economic and other similarities among patients in clinical drug trials reduces the chance that variations in levels of health care, or other variables, will affect the data generated. ACT UP suggested that NYU provide primary care physicians for those patients who cannot afford them, rather than excluding these patients outright. NYU has apparently agreed to this suggestion, according to Harrington, who added that IV-drug users are often excluded from drug trials because they are perceived to be potentially unreliable participants.

On Dec. 13th, HHC, which must review all drug protocols proposed for public hospitals, approved four of these 11 trials, and began examining the other seven. The drugs to be tested include anti-virals, as well as drugs that fight blindness, pneumonia, and other AIDS-related conditions.

According to Harrington, ACT UP will be targeting Albert Einstein and Mount Sinai hospitals in future actions. Mount Sinai is excluding patients from its city-run affiliate in its AIDS drug trials, and Einstein is excluding those patients without primary care physicians, according to ACT UP sources. □

the Local 26 Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Union throughout its negotiations with management earlier in December, told *GCN* that his purpose for studying law was to "represent people who are trying to bring about social change." Beck also added that he has a significant personal link to AP issues — his brother died of PCP in 1985 before the treatment was available as a prophylaxis.

Beck was cautious when answering questions about ACT UP's proposed defense, but he did say, "We would like to put John Hancock on trial as much as possible." Schmidt, after being released from jail, told *GCN*, "I consider this a quicker way for people with no money to sue a company."

Rich Bevilacqua, spokesperson for John Hancock, answered questions for the press while watching the demonstrators from the lobby of the Hancock Tower. He maintained that John Hancock will not be influenced by activists or public officials to change its policy. Boston's AIDS Action Committee and the Mass. Department of Public Health "have both asked us to examine our policy," said Bevilacqua. But until "medical information that's conclusive" is available, Bevilacqua said that John Hancock will not change its policy.

According to ACT UP member Steven Busby, the group has been working during

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# OUT! breaks out in DC City Council

By John Zeh

WASHINGTON - Nearly 200 people recruited by the direct action group OUT! restaged the Boston Tea Party at City Council's final session in 1988. The demo was called to protest the Council's compliance with Congressional denial of D.C.'s home rule prerogatives offering gay rights protections and federally funded abortions. (See *GCN*, Nov. 13, 1988 and related story, p.3)

Police say they carted off 30 protesters, but only arrested three for disorderly conduct. "Take off the gloves," shouted OUT! members as gay activist Gerry Green, a person with AIDS, was hauled off after reading aloud from the Declaration of Independence. He told *GCN* police denied him a jacket, blankets, and heat, causing him to collapse from "onset of hypothermia" en route to being locked up.

Supporters of OUT!, or Oppression Under Target!, tossed hundreds of tea bags and confetti in the shape of pink triangles onto the chambers' floor to draw allusions to historical precedents of repression by the British parliament and the Nazis.

"The Boston Tea Party in 1773 was the very first direct action undertaken by European Americans to free themselves from oppression," Green said. "The rebellion continues here in D.C."

Through a "consent" agreement that required no debate, Council passed bills that gutted its strict protection of insurance ap-



John Zeh

Two activists are dragged out by gloved cop

plicants from testing for HIV antibodies and granted tax free city bonds to Jesuit Georgetown University, while ignoring the city administration's cut-off of abortion funding for poor women.

"Shame, shame," shouted OUT! activists as Council complied with a Congressional mandate to repeal the testing ban and refused to include stronger anti bias riders on both bills. "Silence equals death," they chanted.

"Council has just rolled over and played dead," said OUT! spokesperson Urvashi Vaid, describing the "pandemonium" in chambers. "We're very angry that our elected officials are not standing up for us." She called the original insurance law "fair" and said the repeal would deny health care to people who are HIV antibody positive. □



John Zeh

OUT! members Barrett Brick, left, and Jorge Cartinas shower City Council chambers with pink triangles

## Armstrong amendment overturned

Activists happy with surprising ruling but are still angry with D.C. City Council for "selling out"

By Chris Bull

WASHINGTON — In a victory for lesbian and gay activists and proponents of D.C. Home Rule, a federal court judge ruled Dec. 14 that Congress lacked the constitutional power to force the city to overturn anti-discrimination legislation protecting lesbians and gay men.

The unexpected ruling by conservative, Reagan-appointed U.S. District Court Judge Royce Lamberth said Congress violated the City Council's right to free speech. The council sued to oppose the so-called "Armstrong amendment," which was passed last October as part of the D.C. appropriations bill (See *GCN*, Nov. 13, 1988). Authored by Sen. William Armstrong (R-Colo.), the amendment would have permitted religiously "associated" educational institutions to discriminate against "any person or persons that are organized for, or engaged in, promoting, encouraging, or condoning any homosexual act, lifestyle, orientation, or belief." The bill came in the wake of a long court battle in which Georgetown University, a Catholic

school, was found in violation of D.C.'s gay rights law. Congress told the District to exempt religious institutions from its Human Rights Act by December 31 or risk a cutoff of all city funds.

"Members of city council, like any other legislators, have First Amendment rights," Lambert said in his opinion. "The fact that Congress retains the greater authority does not render the speech of council members unprotected," he said. Lambert conceded that the Constitution gives Congress power over the city, but said "without protection to vote as they wish, legislators would be unable to consummate their duty to their constituents." The ruling is the first to place any limits on congressional authority over the District.

Activists praised the ruling. "We believe it is a great decision," said Herb Schultz of the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club. "It's a major victory for home rule and gay rights in the District. We have the strongest human rights act in the country and we intend to

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## Hancock

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theme, demanding "AP for Christmas."

After picketing for an hour, the eight men who had prepared for CD sat in front of one of the revolving door entrances to the Hancock tower. They held up decorative placards, one bearing illustrations of men in red and green outfits and another penned in green cursive script: "Seasons Greetings, 12,500 Dead, First Bout PCP."

John Hancock, a major health insurer in the state, covers AP as a prophylaxis only if a policyholder has previously developed PCP. Yet about 25 percent of PWAs with PCP do not survive their first case.

As Boston Police Captain Ciccolo perfunctorily informed the men they were trespassing, demonstrators crowded around the CDers and police officers. They shouted, "They say get back. We say fight back!" until each CDer was escorted by two officers to the awaiting police van. After arriving at the Area D police station, Warren Blumenfeld, Stephen Burke, Steven Busby, Donald Smith, Raymond Schmidt, Phillip Schwartz, Stephen Skuce, and James Sullivan were held for an hour and then released on \$25 bail and their personal recognizance.

Daniel Beck, a Cambridge attorney, has offered pro bono services to ACT UP members going to trial. Beck, who advised



## We're going on vacation!

After another four months of weekly writing, editing, producing, typesetting, printing, fund-raising, advertising and marketing (not to mention sweating, laughing and crying), we're gonna' start RECOVERING, RELAXING and REJOICING by taking next week off. Don't worry — we'll be back the first week of January. While we're on vacation though, don't forget to give the gift of gay politics, sex and culture through GCN's special gift subscription offer. What better way to bring in the new year!

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**News Editor:** Coordinate and edit the work of staff and volunteer reporters covering local, national and international events of importance to the lesbian and gay community. Write news stories as necessary. Participate in layout and production of the paper. Qualifications: Strong writing ability and editing skills, ability to work with others, strong organizational skills, ability to work with deadlines, knowledge of lesbian and gay issues. Deadline for application: January 27.

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## Challenge bathhouse closings

Dear GCN:

The shutdowns of Mac's bathhouse, Los Angeles, and Cinema 14 theatre New York [GCN Nov. 20-26], suggest an escalation in the state's closing of Gay facilities.

Officials claim they are closing these places to prevent the spread of AIDS. But they present no evidence that past closings have actually reduced that spread. Their effect, concludes the National Academy of Sciences in *Confronting AIDS*, is "largely symbolic." What has been stopped is on-site education and in some cases counseling, which does prevent AIDS.

If official claims on the spread of AIDS were scientifically based, they would apply to straight saunas as well, since the virus does not single out Gays. Yet usually only Gay-used facilities have been closed. The "symbol" is clear enough.

The closings have so far affected a range of establishments — from bathhouses to bookstore areas to at least one theater. The wording of measures in different jurisdictions is in some cases identical — and not limited to bathhouses. These factors suggest that officials and others in these jurisdictions have engaged in a conspiracy to deny our people the right and ability of association. However different the situations, these measures do recall Frank Rector's reference in *The Nazi Extermination of Homosexuals* (p.66) to a 1933 Third Reich decree closing short-term hotels and other places frequented by Gays.

This is not to deny sincere differences of opinion of our people over the issue of bathhouses. But officials have targeted Gay-used places, not biologically unsafe behavior. The same arguments used to close some places now can and will be used to close other Gay facilities. If unchallenged now, they will be that much more difficult to challenge later.

If we cannot agree on the one case of bathhouses, let's at least decide what actions we will take if and when the state escalates its closing of our facilities beyond bathhouses, bookstores, and theaters.

Sincerely,  
Eric L. Shambach  
Minneapolis, Minn.

## PWA has 'nothing coming'

Dear GCN:

A few days ago I learned that Larry Snyder died on October 30 at Springfield [Federal Bureau of Prisons Medical Center]. I am very SAD about this. They just denied him *any* parole. Jesus Christ, he was only in for Pandering!! His mother begged them to let him go (me too!). They told him he had nothing coming. He helped me start up the PWA-RAG [Prisoners With AIDS — Rights Advocates Group].

Today I was informed my T4/T8 had dropped since April to 240/480. That's a 50 percent drop. I was beginning to hope that I too would be spared. I don't want to die, not in here!

I told the Bureau of Prisons that while I was in Talladega [prison], being all kooped up like a chicken (poor chickens), my immune system dropped. I became ill and was sent to Springfield. My T4/T8 value jumped up remarkably there. I kinda blended in over there with all of the other HIVs. I was one of several hundred from what I was told.

Needless to say, Larry was a good friend and *also* a 'trooper'. I wish there was some way that I could get his name "L.A. SNYDER" put on the Quilt. He told me that (trying to smile, with tears in his eyes) 'If I die, would you try to get someone to inscribe my name on the Quilt?' I said yes and asked him to do the same for me.

Is there anyone out there who could arrange this? I mean L.A. Snyder's name, that is. I'm not ready yet!

I'd like to dedicate this small poem I wrote to L.A. Snyder:

*Twas a Fright before XMAS*

*Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the Camp, not a PWA was stirring for fear of 'The Man'.*

*The PWAs were nestled all snug in their cells, with doors tightly bolted, slammed shut on their hands.*

*Thru the walls in the night and the coughs, hacks and sneezes, the PWAs huddled to ward off diseases.*

*When all of a sudden came a jingling of keys down the hall, laughing 'Merry Christmas to all!'*

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Opinions reflected in "editorials" represent the views of the paid staff collective. Signed letters and columns represent the views and opinions of the authors only. We encourage all readers to send us comments, criticism, and information, and to volunteer and become members.

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*The fact remains, we are here for a 'crime' (like 'pandering' or 'parole violation') but we don't have the time...*

*We ask the forgiveness of our wrongs and our gaffs, but are murdered by an executioner that laughs...*

In loving memory,

Jim Wagner  
38670-019  
PO Box 34550  
Memphis, TN 38184

## Jewish mothers with many sons

Dear GCN:

It was nice to see a feminist interpretation of the Hannukah Maccabee story by Liz Galst (December 4-10, 1988), though I'm not sure my college professors would have agreed with her telling of the story, especially the rereading of Simon to Simone. But, who knows, maybe Liz is correct.

I do want to comment directly on one thing Liz says. In referring to the Maccabee family, which the tradition tells us was made of five boys and no girls, Ms. Glast says "Jewish mothers are never stricken with such misfortune." She even has to use Phil Donahue to make her point.

Just for the record, my mother is one such mother, as Ms. Galst says, "stricken with such misfortune." While we are actually only four boys, there are no female siblings in my family. I know that my mother feels a great loss that she has no daughters (she reminds us of this frequently.) To make up for this "tragedy" we nicknamed my "hippiesh" brother of the '60s-'70s Michelle (from Michael) and I did my part by becoming a flaming faggot. Her pleasure came only when her two granddaughters were born.

Finally, Ms. Galst might want to know that of the four brothers, one is a corporate lawyer, one a construction worker, one a college student and one a professor of Hebrew (me). (The construction worker and student live in Southern California too.)

Sincerely,  
Roger Kaplin  
Atlanta, GA

## Divisive and destructive techniques

Dear GCN:

Perhaps sex discrimination has always been here, tho not as openly and overtly as now. If it continues to thrive, then I must question my own integrity and inner strength to survive what I see to be divisive and destructive techniques aimed at maiming the minds of an otherwise intelligent class of human beings, ie women.

The distinction between woman and man is quite clear in a setting such as prison. New facilities for (some) men have included industrial classes, new computer technology, and continuing education, but have all been off limits to me. My only option has been in menial labor or the mental health facility. Where the staff force "medication" on you and then deny it.

This entire experience has become a macabre joke, and it will only be upon my release, if the "Horrors" (parole and disciplinary staff) grace me with their release, that I will feel I have awakened from this nightmare.

Brenda Taylor  
1034 Bragg St.  
Raleigh, NC 27610

## Clarifying The Nation's ethics and politics

Dear GCN:

When biographies of Roy Cohn, the right-wing lawyer, were reviewed in the presumably left-wing magazine *The Nation*, we expected attacks on Cohn's politics. We got that and more, including anti-gay bigotry of the most blatant kind from the reviewer, Robert Sherrill. I wasn't surprised that *The Nation* refused to publish my own protest, which was published instead in the Sept. 4-10 issue of *GCN*. But even I — after much experience on the left, and after earnest avowals of "good faith" over the telephone from Elizabeth Pochoda, *The Nation's* literary editor — was surprised by the fictions and evasions in the letter she wrote to *GCN* [Oct. 23-29]. As Pochoda notes, I did indeed ask the editors of *The Nation* to "clarify their own ethics and politics in publishing Sherrill's views." Let's start with Pochoda's first mystification:

"Since Scott Tucker's letter to *The Nation*... arrived here several weeks too late to be included in our exchange about Robert Sherrill's review of the Roy Cohn biographies, we have invited him to propose an article for *The Nation* about homophobia on the left..." I was mugged by anti-gay thugs, and explained the delay in that very letter. Pochoda knows very well that nothing arrives too late at *The Nation* for publication if only the chief editor, Victor Navasky, decides to publish it. Anyone who reads *The Nation* also knows that political exchanges there can reach epic proportions, stretching over weeks, months, years....

The Old Left never found feminism nor gay liberation to be particularly sexy; and the New Left of the Sixties failed to break many of those old habits. There are women and gays at *The Nation* who are irritated and impatient with Navasky's editorship, but a job is a job, and a boss is a boss. Keep that in mind when Pochoda claims I was "invited" to contribute to *The Nation*. She doesn't say that there was an editorial dispute about publishing my original protest, with Navasky, of course, having veto power. When that protest was printed anyway in *GCN*, Pochoda then suggested that I send a proposal directly to Navasky to write an article on heterosexism on the left. (I do insist on the word heterosexism, and never agreed to write about "homophobia.")

Keep in mind, too, that one of the heterosexuals in question, namely Robert Sherrill, is indeed "a contributing editor to this (*The Nation*) magazine" and "has written for it since the 1950s," just as Pochoda states. This is, however, a metaphysical juggling act in which Pochoda denies any attempt to "excuse homophobia" and then does just that. Pochoda states that Sherrill's "record of defending victims of many sorts against oppressors of many sorts both in these pages and elsewhere is, in my view, unmatched in American journalism."

If this were true, read it and weep! It is true that this defender of the oppressed did not find gay people worthy of defense during the sexual and political witch-hunts of the Fifties, nor is he a notable defender of ours today. On the contrary, Sherrill revels in his own bigotry and brutality, confident that leftist editors will make his excuses for him. And they do. Pochoda admires Sherrill's "style" and "tone," his "fresh" and oh-so-daring "on the edge" qualities which, it is true, "frequently give offense." Traditionally, the left aims to give offense to the oppressor; but when offense is given to queers, even leftists (even today) will admire a bigot's gusto.

Pochoda simply demonstrates that heterosexism is tolerated and even approved among many leftists who would never let pass a racist or sexist remark. Despite some opposition from other staff members, Navasky and Pochoda decided to publish Sherrill's stylish and daring tone-poem, in which AIDS falls with poetic justice upon the right-wing Roy Cohn. Pochoda calls this "fresh" and "on the edge?" I'd call it rotten and around the bend, as tired and crazed as Reverend Falwell. The only difference is that Falwell's God prefers to strike down left-wing sodomites.

"I now think," writes Pochoda, "and the exchange of letters has been pivotal in my attitude, that all of the greatness of Sherrill's writing about Cohn does not outweigh the bigotry unleashed in his attack on the man's sexuality." I fairly gasp at "the greatness of Sherrill's writing" — please can this canard, Elizabeth Pochoda, and tells us instead why only this exchange of letters has awakened and enlightened you all of a sudden! Were you, Navasky and Sherrill all deep asleep during the Stonewall Rebellion in 1969, during the White Night Rebellion in San Francisco, during the national marches for lesbian and gay rights in 1979 and 1987?

Sherrill found AIDS to be a "fitting" end to Roy Cohn's life. "Tucker may find the ascription of irony to anyone's death cruel, as I do, but I can assure him that Sherrill's 'poetic justice' is even-handed." Self-hating Jews and blacks who oppressed their own people (as the self-hating Cohn oppressed fellow gays) would have received the same treatment from Sherrill, according to Pochoda. Well, why not? It's all part of that barbarously chic, daring style she so admires and sees fit to print in the progressive pages of *The Nation*. Pochoda adds, "If you think he is any easier on heterosexual criminals, I refer you to his famous article on Teddy Kennedy and Chappaquiddick in

# The Guardian's commitment to lesbian/gay struggles

By The Guardian Staff

This column is in the nature of a long belated response to Jim Kemp's *Speaking Out* column (*GCN*, May 8-14, 1988) and an update on our work.

We are grateful to Jim for having taken the time to present his criticism at last year's Socialist Scholars' Conference and to then turn it into the column. Since then Jim, Robert Lederer and Donna Minkowitz, who have all written for the *Guardian* on lesbian/gay and AIDS issues, met with our staff to further discuss these matters. We feel that the criticisms in both the column and in the meeting have had a positive effect, particularly by increasing our sensitivity to these issues. This kind of input has helped us improve our understanding — and thus our coverage — of the AIDS crisis and pointed us toward building stronger links with the lesbian/gay and AIDS activist communities.

The *Guardian* has an unwavering commitment to the lesbian and gay struggle and the growing AIDS activist movement. We support the lesbian and gay struggle with our coverage of key issues and events and by helping to build stronger links between all oppressed communities.

Regarding Jim's criticisms, despite some differences on particular points, we agree with the general issues he and others have raised. We were not adequately prepared to cover the AIDS epidemic and we have not dealt well with issues of sexuality. The need for a more comprehensive strategic approach to these issues is evident. Keeping in mind our agreement with most of the criticisms Jim made, we would like to comment on some of his specific points.

1. Jim criticized Kevin Kelley's review of *And the Band Played On*. We fully accept the criticism. The book should have been reviewed by someone more sensitive to and knowledgeable about the controversy it has generated in the AIDS activist movement. Donna Minkowitz has done just that in our recent Summer Book Review Supplement.

2. When we ran the interview with Cuba's Deputy Public Health Minister on the Cuban HIV-seropositive quarantine policy, we intended to clearly demarcate ourselves from that policy. Among other things, we said Cuba's policy "contradicts the virtually unanimous recommendations of the scientific community, health rights organizations and civil liberties groups in the U.S."

The preceding was intended as a justification for *running* the interview, not as Jim says "a long justification for the policy" or "tacit approval" of the policy.

It is however true that we should

*The New York Times Magazine*." This is a false analogy, and Pochoda knows it. Sherrill did not attack Kennedy for being heterosexual, but for acting in criminal cowardice. Sherrill did attack Roy Cohn, however, not simply for acting criminally, but also for being homosexual.

Pochoda told me that *The Nation* would publish an explanation for her editorial actions, presumably resembling the one she sent to *GCN*. No such explanation has yet appeared in *The Nation*.

Pochoda has publicly asked that I propose an article to *The Nation*, and I publicly accept. I propose to act and write *as if* free speech for lesbian and gay radicals was a reality in *The Nation* — not simply token show-pieces once in a blue moon, but bread-and-butter everyday free speech alongside the likes of Sherrill.

I urge other lesbian and gay writers not to accept only crumbs, but to agitate, educate, and organize inside and outside any and all

have run an opposing viewpoint or an editorial in the same issue more specifically criticizing the policy on medical, ethical and political grounds.

3. Jim's article on confidentiality should not have been run with an opinion slug. We mistakenly slugged it that way and when we discovered our error we pointed it out to him and apologized for it.

Several of the editors reacted unfavorably to the article as originally written, so we asked him to rewrite it. He did and it should not have been run as an opinion. The whole process took longer than it should have. For this we also apologized.

4. No one at the *Guardian* subscribes to the view that Jim says "more than one editor" enunciated that anyone who "carried the AIDS virus (sic) should not be having sex."

In our meeting with Jim, Donna and Robert there was a healthy give-and-take about Jim's criticisms and we feel that an understanding was reached which allowed us to move forward. We also agreed that these specifics pointed to a deeper problem at the *Guardian* — our inadequate coverage of the AIDS epidemic and the lesbian and gay movements. This all pointed to our overall weakness in covering issues of sexuality.

All this has led us to a commitment to better coverage of the AIDS crisis and the lesbian and gay movements. We are also more involved in the AIDS activist movement — one of our staff is regularly attending New York ACT UP meetings — and we believe our recent coverage reflects this. We have been advertising for writers familiar with the lesbian and gay movements, organizations and political debates. John David Aloisi-Nalley has begun writing for us since these discussions. We hope this letter will turn up more people able to write on these issues. We also include affirmative action for lesbians and gays in our hiring policy.

We have had a study group on sexuality, lesbian and gay struggles and related questions.

The left in general, and the *Guardian* in particular, needs to better understand the politics of sexuality and the lesbian and gay struggles. We hope that, at least for us, Jim's criticisms and the developments since have been the catalyst for such development. We hope that our coverage since last spring reflects it.

One last note: We are planning a special issue to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Stonewall next June. Anyone interested in working on this project should contact Dan Cohen c/o *Guardian*, 33 West 17th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011 or call 212-691-0404.

editorial offices ruled by straight white men. One by one, we are easily picked off or mollified; together we can win more than charity. No fundamental change will occur until outspoken gay people share editorial power and decisions. In the meantime, listen to John Judis proclaim, "I am a socialist conservative." In the meantime, pay attention to a direct-mail solicitation for *The Nation* which reads, "We're not a radical rag." That's for sure, and in the meantime Elizabeth Pochoda tells me, "You're just trying to pick a fight." When the left lives up to its own ideals, the raggedy radicals won't have to fight so hard for free speech.

Scott Tucker  
Philadelphia, Penn.

Postscript: On October 31, *The Nation* offered me a contract to write an article on homophobia on the left, which I have since submitted. Only time will tell whether this is a gesture of temporary tokenism.



Hancock

Continued from page 3

the last year almost exclusively on making AP available in the Boston area. Blue Cross/Blue Shield changed its policy to include coverage of AP earlier this year after receiving pressure from ACT UP and state officials. Ironically, the state recently switched its employees' health insurance from Blue Cross/Blue Shield coverage to John Hancock. Burke said he participated in the CD, in part to call attention to the implications of John Hancock's policy for state employees. Burke said that although he could not receive reimbursements for AP from the private health insurance company the state pays, he would be eligible for AP as a Medicaid recipient.

Currently AP treatment is available in Boston at Beth Israel, Massachusetts General, and New England Deaconess Hospitals as well as the Fenway Community Health Center and Harvard Community Health Plan.

So far AP has not been available at Boston City Hospital (BCH) which serves a large number of people of color, gay men, and IV drug users — populations that are all disproportionately affected by AIDS. But Boston Mayor Raymond Flynn announced Dec. 1 that he approved the allocation of \$500,000 for administering AP at BCH.

ACT UP members told GCN they are hoping that a "not guilty" finding for the CDers in court will underscore the gravity of treatment issues for PWAs. The trial date will be set Jan. 15, but the activists said they are optimistic that John Hancock will be persuaded to change its policy before that date. □

Judge

Continued from page 1

office. He said that many Dallas residents are anti-gay and would probably re-elect Hampton when his term ends in 1990. But Waybourne noted that a *Dallas Herald* poll reported that 58 percent of those who responded said Hampton should resign his post.

Lesbian and gay groups in Dallas and from around the country are pressing ahead with calls for Hampton's dismissal or resignation. The Texas Human Rights Commission Dec. 16 filed a complaint against Hampton with the Texas Commission on Judicial Conduct. "Hampton's remarks show open disregard for the laws of our state. He has created an entirely new class of crime: Murder of expendable classes of people," states the complaint.

However, the director of the Judicial Conduct Commission was quoted by the *Times Herald* as saying "I can't think right off of any part of the [judicial] code that might [have been violated]. It's [Hampton's] discretion." Waybourne said he hoped the community and its supporters could put enough pressure on Hampton that he would resign voluntarily.

If nothing else, activists said they had scared "the daylight" out of Hampton. Initially, Hampton was flippant about the controversy. He said "If it makes anybody mad, they'll forget about it by 1990." Since then, as the national media have focused on the case, the judge has become increasingly defensive, referring all questions to his lawyer, according to Thomas. O'Leary said: "We will make it a point not to forget by 1990. If he is still in office at the time, we are going over him."

Waybourne said the case has been covered extensively by the mainstream media. The major networks and newspapers all picked up the story. The *Boston Globe* and *New York Times* ran editorials criticizing Hampton's remarks. Donations and offers of support have come into the GPA from all over the world, said Waybourne. A number of national organizations including the AFL-CIO and the National Organization for Women have called for Hampton's resignation.

In addition to the Dec. 21 action at the City Council, a large rally was organized Dec. 19 in Dallas at the courthouse to put pressure on Hampton to resign. "I think the judge thought he could get away with what he said. He seems to be shocked that a bunch of queers could put up such a fight," said Waybourne.

William Rice, attorney for Hampton, told GCN that the judge has no intention of resigning. "Even if he decides not to seek re-election, I will personally drag him to the bench and sit him down where he belongs." Rice also defended Bednarski's sentence. "I have personally sat in on several of [Hampton's] trials. If I had the choice of any judge in the country based on fairness, I would choose Judge Hampton. . . . However, I think human beings are not machines. When I have a client I always recommend that they dress as though they are going to Sunday school. If they wear jeans and no shoes, it doesn't speak well of them. Similarly, lifestyle plays a role in a judge's decision. For example, if John Doe killed Fred Smith it would make a difference if Fred Smith were a plastic surgeon rather than a transient who held nine jobs in the last year. Still, it was a repugnant crime and I know the judge found it repugnant." Referring to the gaybasher who killed Trimble and Griffin, Rice said "I don't know about kids these days — they are a little wild. When I was a kid we thought running a stop sign was wild. Maybe it has something to do with up-bringing."

This is not the first time Hampton has been accused of discrimination. In 1982, he was one of several conservative leaders in Houston responsible for posting warnings against violating election laws in polling places in minority and Democratic neighborhoods. The signs, which read "YOU CAN BE IMPRISONED" in large red print, were aimed at intimidating Black voters, according to Waybourne. In 1982 Hampton defended the signs by saying, "We have more Black defendants in this court house than we have white defendants. If they steal more, I guess they could be intimidated more."

□ filed from Boston

Amendment

Continued from page 3

keep it that way."

Robert Bray of the Human Rights Campaign Fund (HRCF) said, "This confirms what we've believed all along: that the homophobic legislation passed by Armstrong and the U.S. Congress stinks." And Steve Smith, also of HRCF, commented that "Congress can't force its dirty work on local elected officials. If the decision stands, it will be more difficult for the extreme right in Congress to force its will on the District."

Despite the successful challenge to the Armstrong Amendment, activists warned, however, that the ruling may have little effect on the community's effort to persuade the City Council to stand up to Congress. Just hours after the judge's decision was handed down, the Council voted to grant bonds to Georgetown University and to repeal D.C. law barring insurance companies from testing applicants for antibodies to HIV (see story, page 3). The Council had earlier changed its residency requirements for city employees after Congress threatened to withhold funds. Activists were also disappointed that the Council took no action to challenge Congress' demand in October that the District stop using federal funds to pay for abortions for poor women.

Several activists said Lamberth's decision was an open invitation for City Council to defy Congress and enact pro-lesbian and gay legislation. They criticized the City Council for "selling out" the community. "It's a disappointment to us that the Council agreed to fight Congress in court but nowhere else," said Schultz. "We felt the decision opened the door for taking a stronger stand particularly in regards to HIV testing. Ultimately, Councilors were fearful Congress would take further action against the city," he said.

Schultz said Lamberth's decision was based on narrow, free speech grounds and left open the issue of whether private schools should be allowed to discriminate on the basis on sexual orientation. Therefore, many Councilors may have feared that Congress would vote to allow Georgetown to discriminate or to abolish home rule entirely, according to Schultz.

Sue Hyde of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the D.C. activist group OUT!, told GCN that the council and Marion Barry, D.C.'s Mayor, "betrayed" the lesbian and gay community. "The city's leadership is attempting to maintain their illusion of power by backing down from a confrontation with Congress. Had the Council been interested in the welfare of the city instead of their own small piece of the home rule pie, they could have seized the opportunity to build a Statehood movement. But because they are so politically bankrupt they failed to take the opportunity," said Hyde. She said the Council believes that the lesbian and gay community does not wield enough electoral power to force them to

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"Hug a person with AIDS", from Syracuse Cultural Workers Calendar.

## Leather, Peace and Wombyn over Forty

### More 1989 calendars

**Leatherwomen 89, Proceed With Caution.** Photography by J.C. Collins. To order send \$12 plus \$2.50 shipping fee per calendar to Leatherwomen 89, 2215 R Market St., Suite 438, S.F., Calif. 94114

Oh girlfriend, have I got some hot stuff for you! Get a gander at the 1989 Leatherwomen "Proceed with Caution" calendar from the San Francisco Lesbian Leatherworld. These girls take that "do it in the butt" ditty of a tune quite literally I'd say, cuz amidst the nipple rings, fishnets and Harleys this chained gang of chums is having a grand old time fanny fist-fucking. Photo after photo has lace, leather and latex (not to mention a few other dandies) up the yahzoo. Sexy scenes — of gartered fems and butch bottoms who willingly "give it up" or "put it out" — emanate community camaraderie and safety. And the entire creation is ripe with safe sex: you'll glimpse as many condoms and rubber gloves as crotch shots.

This calendar is not for the faint of heart (unless you have some strong butch dominant to hold you while you swoon); you might just wince — as you get wet — viewing frames pregnant with knives, crops and cats (not of the meowing kind). These implements throttle or cradle various captive pretties. And some of these girls are pin-ups in the literal sense. If you have any doubts about this, just check out the August action.

One caution: the thought-police will most assuredly banish you from vanilla sex land if they nab you lurking among these fantasies. My only regret: nowhere, damn it, did this luscious-leathered lot scrawl their private phone lines.

Wickie Stamps

**1989 Wombyn Over Forty.** Photographs by Ana R. Kissed. To order, send \$8-14 (sliding scale, includes postage) to Ana. R. Kissed, 56 Brackett St., Portland, Maine 04102.

Here is the perfect calendar to combat the modern-day mainstream media bombardment of what a woman should look like. It includes 13 black and white photographs of nude women the way they really are! Check out those lacy stretch marks and wrinkles, voluptuous tummies, soft skin and ooh-la-la, maybe you won't be in such a hurry to buy Oil of Olay cream or hide those cute nobby knees.

Being void of dark-skinned women is the main fault of this otherwise great, affirming collection of nudes.

Jean Vallon

**1989 Syracuse Cultural Workers Peace Calendar.** "Carry It On." To order by mail, send \$10.95; 3/\$27.50; 5/\$43.95 to SCW Order Service, 126 Intervale Rd., Dept. CL88, Burlington, VT 05401. Call: 802/863-1394.

I look forward every year to the Syracuse Cultural Workers Peace Calendar. And the 18th full-color edition is as beautiful as always — more so perhaps as it is dedicated to people with AIDS and caregivers, and includes photographs from the 1987 March on

Washington by the fantastic Marilyn Humphries and the marvelous JEB. (I disagree with the calendar statement that AIDS "is not a gay issue" — it's not *only* a gay issue, of course, but gay it is. Still, nothing's perfect, and the rest of the dedication is lovely.)

Also wonderful is the Syracuse Cultural Workers trademark attention to glorious artwork — paintings, photos, mixed media, collage. The issues raised this year, in addition to AIDS, include freedom in Central America, censorship, poverty, and the arts themselves — all presented with high, hopeful spirit.

The Syracuse Cultural Workers (who designed the March on Washington "Come out, Come out" poster) also regularly produce other pieces of provocative artwork for social justice. A full catalogue of their posters, cards, etc. comes free with your calendar.

Stephanie Poggi

**War Resisters League Peace Calendar 1989.** 365 Reasons Not To Have Another War. Written by Grace Paley. Paintings by Vera B. Williams. New Society Publishers, Philadelphia. \$8.75.

The 1989 War Resisters League Peace Calendar features an inspiring collection of poetry and prose by Grace Paley and colorful paintings by the award-winning artist Vera B. Williams. The work of these two women is well-matched in its emotional gut level impact; both are direct, powerful and sincere. And their art forms carry enough relevance to "life" to maybe spur an "average" reader into action. Should this occur, waiting for you at the back of this spiral-bound datebook is a handy six-page list of War Resisters League offices and other activist groups. Also handy is that after the year is over, you can tear out the actual datebook pages and have a beautiful book of writing and illustrations about the joy of peace, the Hell of war and fascinating struggle in between.

Worth noting is that this appointment-type calendar is in full color, that a couple of specifically gay days are included (including the June 27th entry of the "1969 Stonewall rebellion in New York City, birth of modern gay movement"), that there's a lovely painting of two women dancing together and many other paintings of people of color. Proceeds from the calendar will be used for the League's peace and justice work here and abroad.

Jean Vallon









Carmen Maura in *Women on the Verge*...

# Queer year-end flicks — Fierstein, Almodóvar and more

## Making movies after the fall of Franco

*An interview with gay Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar*

By Michael Bronski

**G**ay Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar has said that he makes movies as though Franco never existed. But after seeing his films — with their wild sexual episodes, their flamboyant fantasies and subversive plots — you would have to acknowledge that his statement is a complete lie. Almodóvar makes his films with a vengeance, responding directly to the very fact that Franco, and the political and emotional repression of his regime, did exist.

Almodóvar was born in 1950 in a small village in La Mancha in southwestern Spain. He attended religious schools, and at the age of ten won an award for an essay on the immaculate Conception. While he soon became passionately interested in literature, movies, pop culture and rock and roll, you can still detect an obsession with religious icons and sentiments. After involving himself with small theater groups in the early '70s — he had since moved to Madrid to live a more urban, gay life — he found himself in the center of Spanish cultural liberation after the death of Franco in 1975. Within a few years he published a collection of stories called *El Sueño de Razón* (The Sleep of Reason) and a pornographic photo-novel entitled *Todo Tuya* (All Yours). He also wrote for a whole host of new culture magazines like *El País* and *La Luna*. It was for *La Luna* that he created the character Patty Diphusa, whose fictitious adventures detailed her life as an international porn star. These features became so popular that Patty Diphusa has become the Spanish "Lorelei Lee."

In 1980 he found the backing to make his first feature-length film, *Pepi, Lucy, Bom and Other Girls Like Mom*. In 1983 his *Dark Habits* (the adventures of a kinky order of nuns replete with lesbianism, orgies and drug addiction) was shown at both the Miami and Venice film festivals. In 1985 his *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* became a hit in Spain and was showcased at the New Directors/New Films series in New York. *Matador* (about a couple obsessed with sex and murder) was released in 1986 and *Law of Desire* in 1987. The latter was his real breakthrough film and Almodóvar won the Glauber Rocha Award for Best Director at the Rio Film Festival and the "New Generation Award" from the Los Angeles Film Critics Circle. It also did very well on the U.S. art film circuit.

*Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* opened in Spain this past March and quickly became the most successful film in Spanish box office history. It is showing around the United States now to rave reviews. It opens in Boston on December 23 at the Nickelodeon.

The following is a conversation with Pedro Almodóvar which took place in Boston this October.

**Bronski:** Many of the characters in your films are driven by sexual passion. At the same time, your films use a great deal of imagery from Spanish Roman Catholicism and many of the films' characters profess some religious desire. Is "passion" in these two senses related in your films or in the characters?

**Almodóvar:** In Spanish culture the meaning of Christ's passion belongs only to Christ. In my world—in my films—[a different kind of] passion rules the characters' lives and makes them act in unexpected ways. Christ's passion, or role, was very passive; he never decided anything but just gave into what was supposed to happen to him. It is not very exciting. It was not an active passion, but very masochistic.

I am not at all religious, but you have to realize that Spanish culture has always been based on some aspects of Catholicism. People may not always follow the rules but they love to use the symbols. In *Law of Desire* one of the characters has an altar in her home and there are pictures of Elizabeth Taylor and Marilyn Monroe there as well as those of the virgin and some saints. It is very common in Spanish culture for people to steal the ceremonies away from god and keep them for themselves. This is very important I think. The ceremonies are quite beautiful and many times people even forget the origins of their images or their ceremonies and use them for their own needs.

In the Holy Week Festivals in the city of Seville the crowds are so great, there are so many people, that many times you cannot even cross the streets and everyone takes advantage — sexually — of that fact. For gay people it is particularly good. You look out onto the crowd and you find someone that you like and you get next to them and you have to stand together, and it is quite spontaneous. There is much physical contact and after that happens you ask them out for a Coke or a cup of coffee and you might talk about religious things — say that you have a great devotion to the virgin, or whatever — and people are very willing to go to bed with you. People go to the processions with this in mind: not perhaps to go to bed with other people (but that does happen) but to feel this very human, very non-religious heat. And, of course, the processions are very beautiful, very artistic.

Much of Spanish religion — and I like this about it — is very practical. In *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* the grandmother is very religious and very practical. When the mother [played by Carmen Maura] loses her son they all pray to San Antonio, the patron of lost things, to help find him. But this is not strictly a religious practice; it is more Mediterranean. We are not really as religious in Spain as other people think we are. Bull fighting, for example, is much more

sacred than god or Jesus or the virgin.

**Bronski:** I think that there is a perception in this country that because of the Catholic traditions in Spain the country is very repressive about sexuality.

**Almodóvar:** It is very complicated. The Spanish public was much more upset about the implied criticisms of bull fighting in *Matador* than they were about any of the explicit sexuality in it. And there is a lot, some of it connected with violence. And *Law of Desire*, which was about gay male sexuality, and had lots of scenes of explicit gay sex, and lots of nudity, was the most popular film of its year. If you go by the box office, the Spanish movie-going public is much more comfortable with gay sex than what they perceive as an attack on bull fighting, something that they consider the national religion.

*Matador* also made people uncomfortable because it was about physical pleasure (*Law of Desire*, I think, is more about passion, which is different). Physical pleasure is sometimes linked to desire and love and sometimes not. Audiences are happier when physical pleasure is put into some sort of context, given a reason to exist; and because the two main characters in *Matador* seek physical pleasure — in this case a mixture of death and sexuality — without the usually given reasons, people don't know what to do with it. The characters are in search of absolute pleasure, and the fact that they die in one another's arms — murder/suicides — at the point of orgasm is not meant to imply a punishment. If you dream of an absolute pleasure you have to be ready to follow that dream. Absolute pursuits call for absolute prices to be paid. I have never thought that I could accept death so it seemed to me that the one way that someone — myself — might accept death was to make it part of one's pleasure. If you do this then the fatality of death disappears. It sounds very dark but for me it isn't. Actually it is very much part of my (and I think this is very Spanish — especially if you look at some of the plays of Lorca, like *Blood Wedding*) romanticism.

The end of the film is actually not unlike a traditional Hollywood romantic ending. It is a very old-fashioned finish where the lovers come together and both get what they want.

**Bronski:** I wanted to ask you about the women characters in your films; you always seem to favor them. Other directors such as George Cukor or Douglas Sirk seem to have the same affinity.

**Almodóvar:** Certainly today only Ingmar Bergman and Woody Allen seem interested in their women characters. I can't think of any other male directors interested in a female universe. Certainly no Spanish directors. As for a "special affinity," I only know that I am more interested in my women characters than the men characters. Perhaps it has to do with the fact that in Spain we have much better actresses than actors. This may be particular with Spanish culture. The male in Latin culture is much less emotional than the female; the men are very rigid, much more controlled so you find that women are much better actors than men. Continued on page 11

## Passion statement

*Almodóvar's new film, Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*

**Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown.** Written and directed by Pedro Almodóvar. With Carmen Maura, Antonio Banderas, Julieta Serrano, María Barranco, Rossy de Palma, Kiti Manver, Fernando Guillén. At the Nickelodeon, Boston.

By Michael Bronski

**P**edro Almodóvar's new film *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* begins with credits that look as though they have been swiped from discarded copies of *Vogue* and *Elle* from 25 years ago. Tall, slender women with elegant hats and long pointed red nails are cut and pasted on perfect pastel backgrounds in a witty collage of high style and social imprisonment. But as soon as Almodóvar's fantastic farce begins — and his five central women characters do their best to deal with the realities always seeming to push them to the edge of emotional precipices — it becomes clear that magazine fantasies, no matter how seductive and stylish, are not reality.

In *Law of Desire* Almodóvar staged a very funny parody of Cocteau's *The Human Voice*, a one-woman play in which an emotionally distraught character pleads with her lover on the telephone to come back to her. But never one for traditional staging, he had the actress — Carmen Maura playing a transsexual — axing down walls and destroying furniture while a young girl was lip-synching to Edith Piaf songs. He has stated that *Women on the Verge* also began as a filmed version of the Cocteau piece, but it is clear that the creepy masochism of the play was not suited to Almodóvar's temperament, sensibility or politics. None of these women are about to sit by the phone and lament; they are too busy either planning to drug their lovers to make them stay at home or hijacking motorcycles to race off to shoot them. Although *The Human Voice* parody in *Law of Desire* was a funny conceit, all out of control and frantic nervousness, *Women on the Verge* shows Almodóvar to be in tight form, the laughs emerging from a skilled manipulation of the farce structure rather

than the all-hang-out anarchism of *Matador* or *Law of Desire*.

Structurally *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* is a Feydeau bedroom farce with elements of the Marx Brothers tossed in to keep it moving. Pepa (Carmen Maura) is being left by her lover Iván (Fernando Guillén) for another woman. Pepa thinks at first that Iván is going back to his ex-wife Lucia (Julieta Serrano) but realizes that this isn't true when Iván and Lucia's son Carlos (Antonio Banderas) and his girlfriend Marisa (Rossy de Palma) coincidentally and unexpectedly try to rent her apartment. Meanwhile Pepa's ditsy friend Candela (María Barranco) becomes unwittingly involved with a group of Shiite terrorists and turns to the already distraught Pepa for advice and sanctuary. Characters' paths keep crossing and double crossing — Iván's new lover turns out to be his ex-wife's lawyer, Pauline (Kiti Manver), and Carlos falls in love with Candela — at a dizzying rate until the film comes to a standstill with a shootout at the airport where Pepa realizes that all she has to say to Iván is "goodbye."

Almodóvar's films have been noted for their ability to take fantasies and juxtapose them with harsh emotional truths. *Women on the Verge* still takes on this fantasy but its emotional truths are less extreme, more palatable. Whereas *Matador* was about dealing with sex and death and *Law of Desire* was how romantic fantasies can take deadly control of our lives, *Women on the Verge* seems happy to only say that breaking up is hard to do.

Not that there is anything wrong with making a less ambitious film than one has made before — *Women on the Verge* has so many comic and visual pleasures that you never feel cheated — but thematically Almodóvar's newest is not as emotionally challenging as his last work. Part of this is because although the women characters in the film have learned that life is *not* at all like *Vogue* they are all still trapped in fairly traditional notions of relationships; their

Continued on page 11



Matthew Broderick and Harvey Fierstein in *Torch Song Trilogy*

## A landmark in gay cinematic history

*Torch Song Trilogy hits the big screen*

**Torch Song Trilogy.** Directed by Paul Bogart. Written by Harvey Fierstein, based on his play. With Anne Bancroft, Matthew Broderick, Harvey Fierstein and Brian Kerwin. At the USA Nickelodeon, Boston; Janus, Cambridge.

By Christopher Wittke

The good news is *Torch Song Trilogy* is just wonderful! Forget *Scrooged* and *Ernest Saves Christmas* and almost all of the other holiday fare being served up by Hollywood this season and do whatever you have to do to get to a theater to see this movie.

Who would've thought that Harvey Fierstein could take his Tony-Award-Winning three-and-a-half-hour night of theater and come up with an equally fabulous two-hour movie? Both *Torch Songs* tell the tale of drag queen Arnold Beckoff and his interactions with friends, lovers and family. But where the stage version luxuriated in the amount of time it could take to tell its story — in three one-act plays — its big-screen

counterpart benefits from the need to economize in order to keep things moving.

Somehow Fierstein has done it. The movie retains the emotional peaks and valleys of the plays, as well as many of their funniest lines. And the process of "opening up" the action for the big screen has afforded him the opportunity to create some wonderful new scenes and characters that were only referred to in the plays. Filmgoers who know the stage version will feel a sense of familiarity infused with the freshness of Fierstein's rewriting for the screen.

All of the major themes and events from the original *Torch Song* are at least touched on by the film, most are thoroughly explored. Arnold meets and falls for the bisexual Ed. Ed dumps Arnold for a woman named Laurel. Arnold forgets his troubles by getting fucked in a backroom bar. Arnold meets the young model Alan. They fall in love. Arnold and Alan visit Laurel and Ed

Continued on page 12



The cast of *We Think the World of You*

## ...and they called it puppy love

*A film of loneliness and sexual desire*

**We Think The World Of You.** By Colin Gregg. Based on the novel by J.R. Ackerly. With Gary Oldman, Alan Bates and Frances Barber. Nickelodeon, Boston.

By Michael Bronski

**I**t would be flippant, though not inaccurate, to describe *We Think the World of You*, a new film starring Alan Bates and Gary Oldman, as "man meets boy, boy goes to jail, man gets boy's dog" and they all live happily ever after. In fact *We Think The World of You* is probably the first full blown love story between a man and a dog — it makes *Lassie Come Home* and *Benji, The Hunted* look like kids' stuff. And even though the dog, a handsome bitch named Evie, is as full a character as either of the men, *We Think The World of You* is a heart-warming and somewhat chilling story of loneliness and sexual desire.

*We Think The World of You* first emerged as a novel by J.R. Ackerly in 1960. As with *My Dog Tulip* and *My Father and Myself*, his other major works, it was an honest examination of what it means to be a gay man "of a certain age" who is coming to terms with the fact that his life is winding down and he must shepherd his energies and friendships. Its style is both open and arch, never verging on glib camp but always a little removed, reducing large emotions to small observations and thereby making them all the more effective. The film — mainly because of the performances by Alan Bates as the older man and Gary Oldman as his younger, working class lover Johnny — keeps both the intimate tone and the emotional inquisitiveness of Ackerly's novel intact.

Ackerly's story is simple yet direct, like something you may overhear in a gay bar on a slow night. Frank is an older, middle-class Englishman who has taken up with Johnny, the youngish, married son of his cleaning woman. It is unclear if money changes hands, but Frank is always ready to help out Johnny when he needs it. Johnny's mother Millie approves of the relationship — although she chooses not to notice its details — and Johnny's wife, Megan, hates it. When Johnny is sent to jail for a few months on a minor stealing charge, his dog Evie is boarded with Millie and Johnny's father, Tom. They are incapable of taking care of the animal and Frank wants to help out, quickly becoming fanatically attached to the dog. He worries about its welfare in a way he was not able to worry about Johnny. And soon there is a full-fledged war raging between all of the characters over possession of Evie. With Johnny off in prison everyone feels free to act on their emotions about him, displacing them onto Evie who is both loved and hated with the same passions felt for husbands, sons and lovers.

*We Think The World of You* might have just ended up being an odd, ineffectual film, were it not for the performances of Alan Bates and Gary Oldman. Several years ago Bates gave a brilliant performance as Guy Burgess, the gay English spy who defected to Russia in the late '50s, in John Schlesinger's television drama *An Englishman Abroad*. He is just as good here, generating a huge amount of sympathy without ever asking for pity or even understanding. Frank is not as arrogant, or as clever as Guy Burgess, and Bates does a good job of portraying a dull, boring life with the sense of

meaning we all need to go through each day. As Johnny, Gary Oldman is something of a miracle. This is his fourth time in two years playing a working-class Englishman — Joe Orton in *Prick Up Your Ears*, Sid Vicious in *Sid and Nancy*, and Theresa Russell's deranged fantasy son in *Track 29* — and every single performance, including accent, intonation and affect is totally different. (Compare this to most American actors who use set class or regional accents and mannerisms — the exception here being, of



Gary Oldman

course, Meryl Streep who could probably play a working class Englishman as well as Gary Oldman). His Johnny is both thuggish and vulnerable, embarrassed to ask Frank for money (thus betraying a friendship) and yet eager to acquire it (to justify the sex between them). He is an angry momma's boy who is bullied by his wife and takes on a lost little boy look and tone when dealing with Frank. In fact the entire cast is so adept at portraying full-bodied characters, especially the rather negative sides, that our attention is almost forced to gravitate to Evie as a central figure, if only because she is devoid of human meanness and foible.

*We Think The World of You* — the title comes from Johnny's family's constant assurance of their affection to Frank — is a small film, but it is by no means slight or undernourished. A sensitive script, which remains incredibly faithful to its source, and the nuanced performances by Gary Oldman and Alan Bates turn what may have been an oddity into a miniature jewel shining light on our lives as well as its characters. □

## Critics' call

*Reviewers find Fierstein's film to gay, too bold*

By Michael Bronski

**"D**id you see *Saturday Night Live* last weekend?" several people asked as Harvey Fierstein arrived at the Boston press luncheon for his new film *Torch Song Trilogy*. "No, I didn't," crooned that now famous voice, a sound something between a fog horn and a deep throated jazz diva who has just tossed back a double bourbon. "But I'm sure I'll hear about it." The program in question contained a short skit with *Saturday Night Live* regular Jon Lovitt doing an imitation of Fierstein as a television talk show host who always asks his guests if they find him attractive, pleading "I just want to be loved. Is that so wrong?"

Somehow this peripheral question set the tone for the whole promotional lunch. The *Saturday Night Live* skit was not particularly homophobic, and although Fierstein was annoyed by the idea of it ("If you can't get laughs being Jon Lovitt you might as well be Harvey Fierstein," he quipped later), he did not seem overly offended. But this was no ordinary press luncheon, the easy-going kind where there's food, a bunch of questions and if you are lucky, some good gossip. This lunch with Harvey Fierstein felt tenser, like some subtext kept rising to the surface and causing unease.

We got through the soup and the expected questions and answers: "It wasn't that hard writing the script as soon as I reconceptualized the whole story. I wrote the screenplay as though the original play were a novel. Screen technique is so different from play storytelling that you have to rethink the whole thing." "New Line [the film's distributors] is very good about supporting worthwhile products. They take all of the money they make on *Nightmare on Elm Street* films and put it up for products they really believe in." "No. I have a great relationship with my mother. Most of that fighting in the play — between she and I — is actually based upon her and her own mother."

But halfway through I noticed that all of the straight press there — about half the room, the other half being out and not-out gay people — were framing questions in the oddest way. They were solicitous and eager to please, overly so. After a while it seemed as though the main dynamic was that no one wanted to appear homophobic and so all of the questions were cloaked in the most passive-aggressive, obsequious terms. Did Harvey think the film would do well outside of the cities? *Why not. It's a great movie. People are not so unsophisticated in small towns as we might think.* Do you think the movie is too Jewish for Middle America? *It didn't hurt* [the recently released film] Crossing Delancy. Why were your plays *Spookhouse* and *Safe Sex* such critical failures? *Actually they weren't. And Spookhouse has done very well in London and a portion of Safe Sex, [called] Tidy Endings, was a hit on HBO.* Don't you think the last few years [a cleverly veiled reference to AIDS; a word that seemed to be on the no-no list for most of the straight critics] will have an effect on how people see the film? *No. It's not about AIDS, we made sure that it is clearly set in the mid-'70s so there would be no question about it.*

It was after the entree (quite a nice piece of chicken with a wild mushroom sauce — I love food I could never afford to buy myself) that it became clear to me what was going on: Harvey was making people upset and defensive; they felt as though they had to go out of their way to show how liberal, how open they were. And how was Harvey Fierstein doing this? By being openly gay and by speaking forthrightly about himself and the movie. And then it struck me how extraordinary this was: an openly gay man who has written openly gay material and is not hedging or hemming or hawing about it and refuses to be ghettoized or diminished by the preconceptions of press and public.

No one wanted to be rude about the film — I think that all of the critics genuinely liked it — but it made many of them uncomfortable. It was too gay, too open and too bold in talking about homophobia and gay male romance. Question after question raised seemed to be concerned with why the film *might* not do well, how parts of the gay community *might* not like it, how people *might* be put off to see Matthew Broderick kissing another man. And here was Harvey having to defend the film and, on some weird level, defend himself. That's what all those questions were about at the opening of the lunch: how was Harvey going

Continued on page 12



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# Amendment

Continued from page 6  
stand up to Congress on lesbian and gay issues.

A group calling itself the "Defeat Them All Committee" has formed and its members say they will work with the D.C. Statehood Party to elect more progressive candidates in the 1990 election.

□ filed from Boston

# After Franco

Continued from centerspread

the men. Even in *Law of Desire*, which does not have a lot of male characters, my favorite is played by Carmen Maura, who was a man but is now a woman.

**Bronski:** Carmen Maura *plays* a transsexual in *Law of Desire*, but you have also worked with a performer who is a transsexual.

**Almodóvar:** Yes. Bibi Anderson who took her name from the Ingmar Bergman actress Bibi Andersen; she changed the one letter. I have known her since she was a woman so I always think of her as one. It is quite amazing that she has totally transformed herself and you simply cannot imagine her past. In many transsexuals you always find something that remains of the past but not in Bibi. I respect her in many ways. One is an artistic one — she has created a new person and done it perfectly; it is such a good work, so totally convincing.

But I also admire her for her incredible attitude and strength. Last summer we were living together for a month in the south of Spain and it was right next to the town where she was born and she was totally comfortable dealing with the people who knew her before as a man. I think that she is very important for Spain because she has insisted that people accept her for who she is and she has succeeded. She is a very popular actress on stage and now has her own television show which is very popular. I think it is very important for the maturity of our country to accept her in this way. It is a new openness.

**Bronski:** There has been a tremendous burst of artistic energy and production since the death of Franco and the fall of his government, and you are obviously part of this movement. Do you think that your films are exploring new-found territory of Spanish culture and life?

**Almodóvar:** Absolutely. My films are very representative of post-Franco Spain. It would have been impossible to make films like this during Franco's time and if we had made them then, they would not have really represented Spanish society in any way. The fact that my films, and the films of many younger, newer filmmakers, are so popular, shows that there is a new sense of liberation.

**Bronski:** How are your films viewed in other countries? Especially since they are somewhat explicit about sexuality and homoeroticism.

**Almodóvar:** In most of the Mediterranean countries they do very well — Portugal especially. Even *Matador* did very well there. In Italy and Germany they are a big hit, but in England they are almost prohibited. They always ask me to cut things, like the beginning of *Matador* with the man masturbating as he watches the slash movie and the beginning of *Law of Desire* where the main character is directing a gay male porn movie and instructs the actor how to raise his buttocks and masturbate for the camera. I have not been willing to cut anything from the films; so far I have managed to win out and *Law of Desire* will be shown there this month with no cuts. Clearly this censorship is because of the Thatcher government and its conservative policies. The same is true in many of the Latin American countries; there are very strict censorship laws.

However, I am lucky that my films have been shown in Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, at least in festivals, which of course does not make them available to many movie-goers. It is too bad because I think that those countries would share in some of the same cultural sensibilities which are in the film.

I think that I am very lucky to be making films now. Twenty, thirty years ago Luis

Bunuel *had* to go to other countries — like Mexico — to make films because he could not make them under Franco. I am able to create my films in Spain now and I feel very close to the country and to the people. It is a very good feeling for an artist.

# Almodovar

Continued from centerspread

lives revolve around men and marriage and ideas of commitment which are as much a part of a pre-feminist culture as the *haute couture* clip art that opens the film. In fact a good case could probably be made for saying that Almodóvar himself sees his women characters trapped by the very notions of "style" which give the film its chic and artificial look. Pepa runs all over Madrid in high heels and tube skirts that make her hobble and give the impression of restraining a naturally energetic woman. Lucia wears *outré* fashions from 25 years ago — leopard skin cone shaped hats and matching dresses — because they let her think of the old days. Even Candela attracts more attention with her tiny espresso-machine shaped earrings than with her dire political plight.

Up until now Almodóvar has presented us with characters who are past the edge and flying over the abyss; for better or worse they have liberated themselves from the social structures and repressions of everyday life. In *Law of Desire* Camen Maura (who plays Pepa here) was a transsexual actress who had her operation because she was in love with her father who then dropped her for another woman; she then became a lesbian. This is someone who is not looking back or worrying about conventional emotions. *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* may feel as though it is a bit of a backstep for its director — not so much because of its sleek, professional look, although that does separate it from the rest of his work — but because it is examining the lives of the characters who have not broken very far from the everyday reality of accepted life. At the end of the film, Pepa — exhausted, damp with gazpacho and looking for a fight — finally realizes that Iván is not worth worrying about. She is at the first

step of freeing herself from her own worst pre-conceptions; not so much as a woman on the verge of a nervous breakdown but on the verge of liberation.

On some level *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* is not about women, or sex, or breaking up, or nervous breakdowns but is a celebration of pop culture. This has always been true of Almodóvar films; he has an uncanny way of exposing the sometimes hidden, sometimes obvious relationships we all have to the taken-for-granted culture around us. In *Law of Desire* he explored the tension that exists between romantic dreams and celluloid sex images, in *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* the harassed mother's life is made even worse by the images of magazine perfection she has to confront everyday.

And in *Women on the Verge* all of the characters are deluged by and constantly dealing with the effects and messages of pop culture. Pepa and Iván work at a television studio dubbing voices on soundtracks and at one point Pepa actually faints because she cannot deal with the emotions she is called to draw upon to dub Joan Crawford's voice in *Johnny Guitar*. The songs played — some by the great Spanish singer La Lupe — are always reminding them of their heartache and even the mambo playing in the punk taxi Pepa keeps taking to look for Iván makes her cry. Although there are no gay characters here — as there are in almost all of his other work — the sensibility is clearly a gay male one. It is not quite "camp"; there is too much affection, too much real emotion, for that label, but it falls clearly into a gay male tradition which includes Mitchell Liesen, George Cukor and certain Fassbinder films.

Looked at on its own — apart from Almodóvar's other work — *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* is a purely enjoyable, wonderfully constructed film. It may not grapple with weighty emotional stances but presents its subject matter with élan, polish and a wry humor. From its opulent opening credits to its final, quite sweet postcard final image *Women on the Verge* is a neat and perfectly wrapped present of a picture. □



“★★★★★!

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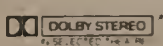
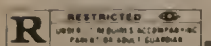
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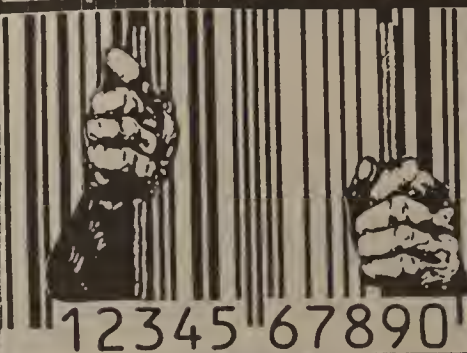
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### Massachusetts Prisoners!

Some lawyer friends in Boston are considering a lawsuit against the DOC's policy towards prisoners and AIDS and voluntary HIV testing. If you have any information that could be helpful, please let me hear about it. (Mike/GCN, 62 Berkeley, Boston MA 02116.



EVERYBODY (who's Gay/Lesbian) doesn't read GCN. I say this so that those of you who put in penpal ads and don't get a response, don't think that you've been 'rejected' by the 'whole gay & lesbian community'... It's a small circulation paper, so if you don't get a response, it don't mean nobody loves you... Just keep tryin', now and then.



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I would like to put an ad in your paper for a penpal. I'm 28 yrs old, in prison, and I like reading, writing and listening to music. I'm a gay female but will write to all. Thank you for your paper. Roslynn TATE, 7271, PO Box 180, Muncy PA 17756.

I would like to correspond with other ladsy. I enjoy the outdoors, camping, fishing, and laying in the sun. I also love football and baseball. Mindy MULL, PO Box 7007, Carson City NV 89702.



Bisexual male, 28, doing a deuce in a segregated housing unit due to positive HIV test result, seeks correspondence from both genders. Interests include: motorcycles, music, art, electronics, the occult, philosophy, and pornography. Eric PETERSON, Box 500 — D-69499, Chino, CA 91708.

Writing to a prisoner can be a way of helping deal with those Holiday BLUES. Please write. Michael WILLIAMS, Drawer K, M-2479, Dallas PA 18612.

Financially secure for prison stay, 37, looking only for correspondence from intelligent, submissive gays. Will answer all, but photo will bring quick reply from this lonely man. James E. SMITH, Box 4005, GSP B-3, Reidsville GA 30499.

Would you please print my ad in your newspaper so I can correspond with someone? Please. Lonely gay man ('Samantha Renee' to my friends) wishing for correspondence. John R. STYLES, 109487-1664, Box 1500, Avon Park FL 33825.

Young Black man, 34, physically fit, mind, body and soul. Would like to correspond with a gay person of any race. Age don't matter. George ROWE, Box D21341 (A-3), Reidsville GA 30499.



19 yr old gay male who likes Music, reading, and camping would like to hear from men with the same interests. Pictures would be nice, but not a must. Thank you for the paper. Don O'NEILL, HCR 70 Box 428, Bucks Harbor ME 04618.

I go by the name 'Kim' and I would love to hear from someone, please. William JOHNSON, B-066558, 19000 SW 377th St, Florida City FL 33034.

Young gay male would like penpals from free world for lasting correspondence. Will definitely answer. Robert GRAHAM, 83219-012, 8901 S. Wilmont Rd, Tucson AZ 85706.

### Oh, dear, ISOLATION (again):

They think I look too feminine and have put me in "protective custody". It's really very lonely. I would love to have someone to write...! Gilberto MARTINEZ, A63863, Box 711, Menard IL 62259.

I got one reply from my earlier ad in GCN and when the person found out I had many years to do, I guess he flew the coop. I guess I can't blame him, but he didn't even say Vaha Con Dios. So if you will please... I need someone to help me remember what it's like not to be in here. Someone, please write and let me know that (how) it's still happening out there. Thank you. Ronald JOHNSTON, 44872 Camp 7, Parchman MS 38738.

### HIV positive in isolation

I am currently being isolated in the prison hospital because I tested positive to the AIDS virus. I am in desperate need of something to read. Thank you for submitting my name as a penpal. Ronald SMITH, 160693, Box 900, Jefferson City MO 65102.

Let's have a true Ball! My friends call me 'Gypsy' (mostly fem) and I'd like to find a true Friend for a warm relationship. Race do not matter. Would like someone free, but prisoners may write too. Ivory WILSON, 17860-009, Box 1000, Lewisburg PA 17837.





6 Friday ☐ Micki Dickoff's dramatic film "Mother, Mother," depicts the estranged relationship between a gay man with AIDS and his mother, played by Polly Bergen (left). Also starring Piper Laurie (right). The film's opening is a benefit for the AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts. 7:45 pm. John Hancock Hall, Berkeley St., Boston. Tkts: \$10, \$35 for admission and reception.

Please note: Calendar listings must be received by the Monday before the week of the event. Photos with listings are encouraged. Please specify if your event is or is not wheelchair accessible and/or sign language interpreted

## 24 Saturday

**Boston** ☐ **Candlelight Christmas Eve Service** MCC Boston, Old West Church, 131 Cambridge St. 7pm. Info: 617/523-7664.

## 25 Sunday

**Somerville** ☐ **Nice Jewish Girls' Potluck** refuge from Christmas. (Jewish lesbians). 12-4pm. Info: Lisa, 617/666-2159.

**Boston** ☐ **Christmas Celebration Service** MCC. 7pm. See above.

**Boston** ☐ **Xmas Disc Party/T Dance** with Rock Against Sexism, 1270 Club, 1270 Boylston. Leave the consumer holidays behind. 9pm-2am. \$2, \$1 before 10pm.

## 28 Wednesday

**Sanford, Maine** ☐ **Gays and Lesbians United** potluck. U/U church, Lebanon (rte. 202) and Main (rte. 109) sts. Info: 207/439-5540 or 490-1295.

## 30 Friday

**Maine** ☐ Snowshoeing at Baxter State Park with **Chiltern Mountain Club**. Winter mt. experience required. Info: Roy, 617/661-1436.

## 31 Saturday

**Cambridge** ☐ New Year's Dance with **Amethyst Women**. DJ; drug and alcohol free. Old Cambridge Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave 9pm-1am \$6 more if/less if.

**Jamaica Plain** ☐ Non-sexist, multi-cultural New Year's Eve at the Jamaica Plain Firehouse. Benefit for Nicaragua Hurricane Relief and Vida Urbana. 659 Centre St. 9pm-? \$7. \$10 door. Info: 617/524-3541.

## January 2 Monday

**Maine** ☐ Snowshoeing with **Chiltern Mountain Club**. See above.

## 4 Wednesday

**Boston** ☐ For comic impressions join Tony Rose at **Club Cabaret**. Through 1/8. Club Cafe, 209 Columbus Ave. 8pm. \$10/\$12.

## 5 Thursday

**Boston** ☐ **GCN's Production Night**. All welcome. Proofreading starts at 5pm. Paste-up after 7pm. 62 Berkeley St., near Arlington & Back Bay T-stops. Info: GCN 617/426-4469.

**Boston** ☐ **Black History Month** GCN coverage planning group meets to discuss special February issues. All Black lesbians and gay men welcome. 62 Berkeley St., near Arlington and Back Bay T stops 7pm. Info: GCN, 617/426-4469.

**Cambridge** ☐ **New Directions for Men** discussion group for non-offending male sexual abuse survivors. Conf. room, Chamber of Commerce, 859 Mass Ave. 8:30-10pm. \$\$ donation. Info: 617/498-9881.

**Boston** ☐ **The Boston Gay/Lesbian Pride Committee** meets the first Thursday of every month. City Hall room 801. 7pm. Info: 617/232-1716.

**Boston** ☐ Deadline for workshop proposals for the **Fifth Annual East Coast Bisexual Network Conference** which will take place May 6-7 in Boston. Submit in writing to Box 1034, Allston MA 02134.

**Western Massachusetts** ☐ Free three session **HIV positive educational group**. Sponsored by the Mass. department of public health. Info: Emily, 413/562-7583.

## 6 Friday

**Boston** ☐ **GCN Mailing**. Come help stuff the paper and meet new friends. 5-10pm. 62 Berkeley St., near Arlington & Back Bay T-stops. Info: 617/426-4469.

**Boston** ☐ World premiere of **Mother, Mother**, a new film about AIDS by Micki Dickoff. John Hancock Hall, Berkeley St. To benefit the AIDS Action Committee of Mass. 7:45pm. \$10; \$35 for admission and reception.

**White Mountains** ☐ Beginner/Intermediate cross-country skiing with the **Chiltern Mountain Club**. \$20 deposit by 12/23. Info: John, 617/648-9185.

## WEEKLY EVENTS

### Saturday

**Boston** ☐ **Living With AIDS Theatre Project** workshop. No performance experience necessary. Club Cabaret, 209 Columbus Ave. 10:30am.

**Boston** ☐ Women's Self-Defense Collective **Women's Self-Defense Classes** All ages and abilities. Meets Wed. eves., Sat. afternoons in South End. Info: 617/574-9433.

**Boston** ☐ **Gay Boston**, with Candace Van Auken. Boston Neighborhood Network, channels A3 and A8. 7:30-8pm.

### Sunday

**Boston** ☐ Metro Healing **healing group** for everyone. Metropolitan Health Club aerobics room, 209 Columbus Ave. 7:30-9:30pm. Info: 617/426-9205.

**Boston** ☐ "**Boston's Other Voice**," radio for gay/lesbian community, with Peter Stickel. 12/25 Music and conversation with Robert Barney, director Boston Gay Men's Chorus. 1/1 Gay life in Australia. WROR 98.5 FM. 11:30pm.

**Boston** ☐ **The Gay Dating Show**, WUNR 1600 AM. 11:45pm-3am.

### Monday

**Boston** ☐ **Alcoholics Together** Les/Gay group holds a free discussion meeting Mon.-Fri. at Gay & Lesbian Health, 180 Cambridge St. 12-1:30pm. Info: 617/227-8353.

**Cambridge** ☐ **Lesbian Rap**. Topics 1/2/89 Holiday-No rap. The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 8-10pm. Info: 617/354-8807 (TTY/voice).

### Tuesday

**Boston** ☐ **Lesbian and Gay Concert and Marching Band**. No auditions. YWCA, 120 Clarendon St. 7:15 p.m. Info: Joe 617/625-3304, Zoe 617/396-2989.

**Providence, RI** ☐ **ACT UP Rhode Island** open meetings. Rocket, 73 Richmond St. 7pm. Info: Bill 617/782-9063.

**Roxbury** ☐ **ACT UP/Boston** meets to confront the AIDS crisis. Room 345, Bldg. 3, Roxbury Community College. **7:00pm** Info: 617/49-ACT-UP.

**Cambridge** ☐ **Bisexual Women's Rap**. 12/27 Being Single/Part of a Couple. 1/5 Meeting Women: Making the First Move. The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 7:30-10pm. Free. Info: 617/354-8807 (TTY/voice).

**Cambridge** ☐ **30's Lesbian Rap** 12/27 Taking Risks. 1/5 Community & Support Systems. 7-8:30pm. The Women's Center (see above).

### Wednesday

**Cambridge** ☐ "**Say it Sister!**" WMBR, 88.1 FM. 7-8pm. 12/28 Women talk about the relationships to their breasts and to their bodies in "All about Breasts."

**Boston** ☐ **Women's Self-Defense Classes** for women of all ages and abilities. See Sat. listing.

**Cambridge** ☐ **Lesbian AI-Anon** with childcare. The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 6:30-8pm. Free. Info: 617/354-8807 (TTY/voice).

**Brookline** ☐ Boston Committee **Determined to Free Sharon Kowalski** meets. Boston Self-Help Center, 18 Williston Rd. 7pm. Info: 617/661-0533.

**Cambridge** ☐ **MASS ACT OUT** meeting. M.I.T., Building 66, Rm. 126. 7:30pm. Info: 617/661-7737.

### Thursday

**Cambridge** ☐ **The Group** 12/22 Holiday Party. 12/29 Last Meeting of '88. Walker Memorial, MIT on Memorial Drive. Info: 617/266-1129.

**Boston** ☐ **Boston Area Rape Crisis Center** drop-in group for women who have been raped. Info: 617/492-RAPE.

### Friday

**Worcester** ☐ AIDS Project — Worcester **support group** for HIV positive, PWAs, PWARCs and supporters. Open to all lesbians and gay men. 51 Jackson St. 7-9pm. Info: Dana 508/755-3773.

**Boston** ☐ **Healing group** for everyone. Santa Fe Hair Salon, 528 Tremont St. 7:30-9:30pm. Info: 617/426-9205.

**Cambridge** ☐ **Women's Coffeehouse** The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 8pm-midnight. Info: 617/354-8807 (TTY/voice).

Calendar compiled by  
Erik Moore



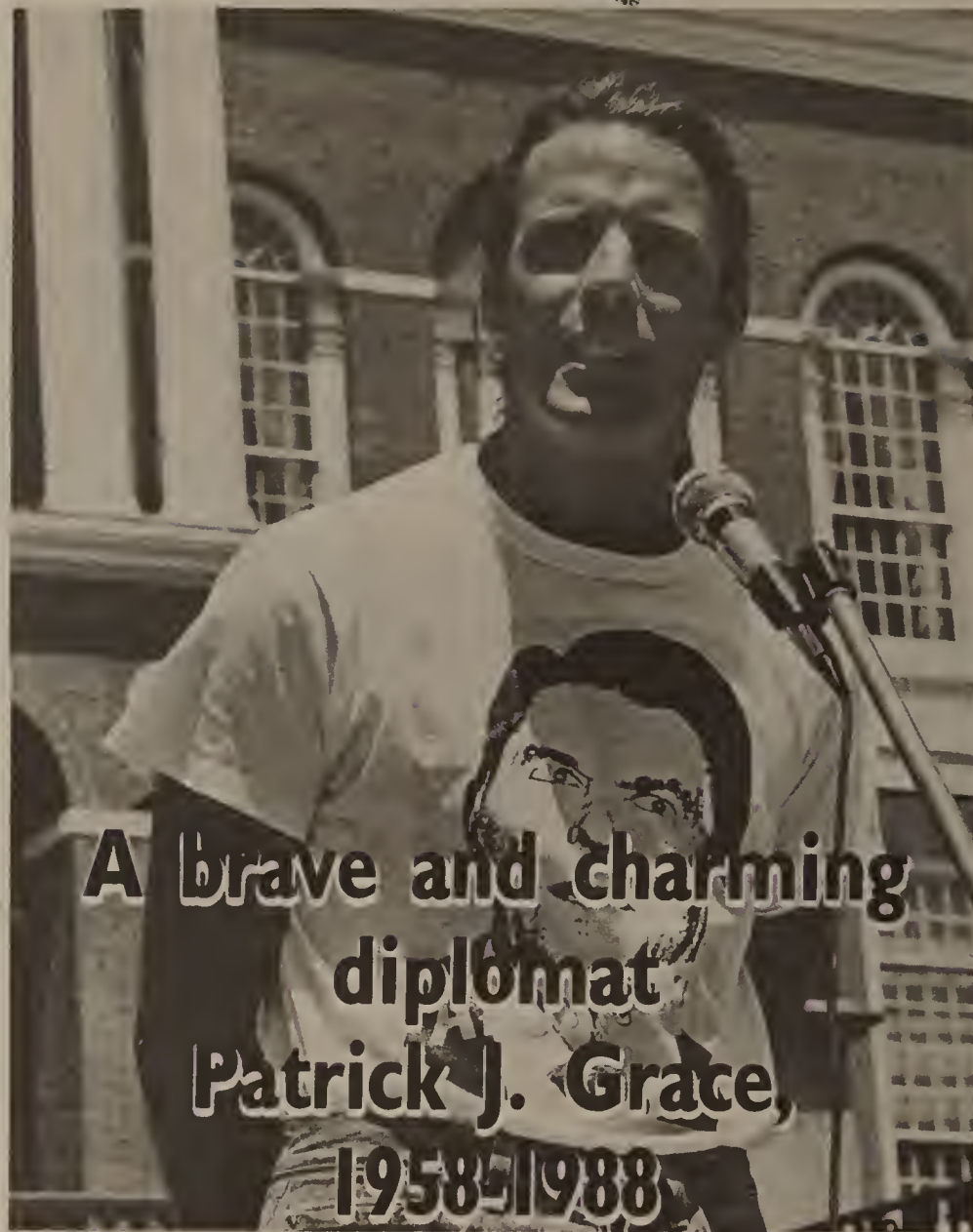
By G. Steven Rose

The sunlight has dimmed perceptibly this week. It's suddenly cold and sullen, gritty, bleak. There are garish Christmas tree lights flashing, but it's still dark, even at noon. There is a bleakness even on Cape Cod at this time of year. The town seems empty and brittle as you walk Commercial Street in Provincetown. It's as if some wintry cold-water sea monster had climbed ashore from the harbor and taken him away. Too weak to resist, he was captured.

But he wasn't just kidnapped; he was murdered — right in his own cozy house in Provincetown. And brutally so — it was done in stages. And he was, in fact, the victim of monsters: some of the viral kind, and some of the human kind (red tape was found strangling the victim). Being the diplomat he was, he might not put it this way, but it must be put forth clearly that Patrick Grace didn't *die*; rather, he was *killed*.

But the delightful and debonair ambassador from Cape Cod — why, he was *living* with AIDS; it wouldn't do *him* in. It did, though, as it has so many of us, and it did so with trademark style: brutally, mercilessly. No creature from the black lagoon can compare with the monster that ate Patrick and sucked the Arizona sunshine right out of him. He tangled with it for 17 months like Saint George and the Dragon, though. And during that time he created a historical record of his life as a gay man with AIDS as colorful and engaging as one could imagine. He leaves us with that: a treasure, full of memories of his "dear friends" — it seemed he called everyone that, and meant it; his philosophical musings; and best of all his incredible ability to take us right to the front lines in his many accounts of journeys of the interior and exterior kind.

That is how most of us in the Boston and Provincetown gay communities know him: through his weekly column in *NEXT* magazine entitled "Living with AIDS," which he wrote without interruption until the first week of December. Many know Patrick from his speeches and attendance at all sorts of political gatherings and demonstrations and other gay/lesbian and AIDS-related events. For those who have read his work, but not met him, you needn't imagine anything but what you already have



Marilyn Humphries

conjured up. Gregarious, suntanned and ponytailed — as if he had just come in from the beach. And gay, in the most gentlemanly sort of way. Polite to a fault. A good listener — eyes riveted, nods of reassurance and approval as he chatted — part politician, part priest, part scholar.

He insisted he couldn't write when invited to do a column for *NEXT*, but others in-

sisted otherwise. His column became a ritual and developed a following, a virtual fan club; some magazines get letters to the editor, but Patrick's got fan mail. His articles are an amazingly detailed, very telling story of life on the front lines — full of not only powerful humanity, but valuable information about his medical case.

The facts of Patrick's medical case are

horrifying. Gentle activist that he was — always compromising, ever-careful to smooth rough edges, the consummate diplomat, hoping to reach as many diverse people as he could — his composure and good humor are amazing in light of what happened to him, and what is still happening to others. He wanted very desperately for his story to be told, but he didn't tell it desperately; he did it elegantly. Some say if Patrick had a flaw it was that he was just too damned nice because what went on during his battle with AIDS was not nice at all.

He had *three bouts* of pneumocystis pneumonia and *still* couldn't get preventative treatment (aerosolized pentamidine). He lived in Provincetown, where there is no outlet for experimental drugs anyway, so it meant a three-hour ride for treatments at the Nev England Deaconess Hospital in Boston. When diagnosed with CMV retinitis, a gruesome infection that makes you go blind, he had to stay in the hospital hooked up to an IV for weeks because he lived so far away and they wouldn't let him be an outpatient. He had a Hickman-type catheter — a little plastic device that allows plumbing to be hooked right up to your body for drug infusion — sticking out of his chest. They wanted to put one in his *head*. Weakened immunologically by three pneumonia episodes, his central nervous system gave way, leaving him paralyzed on one side and with a brain lesion. While he was telling the public in his column about life-saving AIDS treatments and the new activism and about *hope*, while the illnesses and the bureaucratic bungling were killing him. He knew a lot about AIDS — probably more than his doctors — though he almost always praised and encouraged them.

In many ways, he was lucky; he had helped found the Tuscon AIDS Project in Arizona and found a home with friends in the Provincetown AIDS Support Group. He had a good network — one that included his family. In fact, right up until he went into a coma on December 15, he dictated (unable to see or move well enough to write) to his mother. In fact, he seemed everything you need to have to make it, whatever that means. Everything, that is, but a medical system that works right. He even stood on a

Continued on page 12

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